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DCI Briefing NotesCuban Activity in Central America

There is substantial evidence that the Cubans are promoting another major insurgent offensive in El Salvador while at the same time preparing to build up their forces in Nicaragua.

-- [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Havana had stepped up its arms shipments to El Salvador in order to prepare the insurgents for a major offensive around September or October. The idea is to present the US administration with a policy dilemma prior to the elections.

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-- [REDACTED] the Cubans have convinced the guerrillas to go ahead with plans for an offensive in August--a timetable consistent with [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Havana told the insurgents an offensive is needed to enhance their negotiation's posture, claiming that a majority of the US Congress is opposed to military intervention and is prepared to force the Salvadoran government to accept negotiations.

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[REDACTED] the insurgents are continuing to receive supplies, primarily ammunition, from Nicaragua:

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-- [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Nicaragua is continuing to provide ammunition to the Salvadoran insurgents.

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-- [REDACTED] the Sandinistas said at a high-level meeting in mid-May that they considered it vital that ammunition continued to reach the insurgents.

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-- [REDACTED] one guerrilla unit received a shipment of 166 rifles in late May and that weapons and supplies were being transported overland through Honduras in April.

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The Intelligence Community is generally agreed that the planned insurgent offensive is not likely to be an all-out short-term effort designed to overrun large areas, but rather a sustained effort with lesser objectives designed to regain the tactical initiative and demonstrate the insurgents are still a strong military factor.

-- A key to guerrilla success will be whether sustained Army operations through the summer can keep them off balance and prevent coordinated insurgent attacks.

Meanwhile, there is mounting evidence that the Cubans may be preparing to introduce MIG fighter aircraft and possibly even combat units into Nicaragua before our November elections.

-- [REDACTED] the Cubans want to have Punta Huete airfield ready by October to receive fighter aircraft.

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-- The pace of construction has increased substantially there over the last several months, as well as at two other Nicaraguan airfields, and all would be ready to support limited fighter operations by October (see photos).

-- We are watching closely for the appearance of fuel trucks, radar and electronics, and improved air defenses at any of the airfields, which may signal the imminent deployment of aircraft.

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The accelerated construction activity suggests that more Cuban construction workers have arrived.

-- We currently estimate there are some 2,000 construction workers out of the nearly 10,000 Cubans in Nicaragua.

The increased pace of other military deliveries by the Soviet Bloc this year, particularly of tanks and trucks, raises the possibility that the Soviets and Cubans may be pre-positioning equipment in the expectation of major hostilities.

-- It also suggests that Cuban combat units may be preparing to deploy to Nicaragua if necessary.

-- [REDACTED] there are already some 7,000 to 8,000 Cuban troops in Nicaragua, double the Intelligence Community estimate.

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-- Although there is no independent confirmation of this higher number, Community analysts are not prepared to discount it.

-- They are looking for definitive evidence [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] before they raise their estimate.

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